

THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE

NO. 2300

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”*
1 Timothy 1:15

I SPOKE, yesterday, with a brother minister who had been a pastor in America, and I asked him why he was so anxious to go back again where the climate had so greatly tried him. He answered, “I love the people to whom I preach.” “What sort of people are they?” I inquired. “Well,” he replied, “they are a people who come together anxious to get good. They do not try to find fault with me, but they seek to get all the good they can out of the Gospel I preach.” “Well,” I said, “it is worth while crossing the ocean to go to a congregation of that sort of people.”

You know, dear friends, how it is with some people, as it was with one friend to whom I spoke last Tuesday. God had blessed the Word to his soul and he was converted, but he had been hearing me some time before, and I said to him, “How was it, do you think, that during those other years that you came here you did not find the Savior?”

“Oh, sir!” he answered, “I am afraid it was because I came to hear you, and when I had been here and heard you, I was quite satisfied. But when God taught me to come here to look for Christ, and to seek eternal life, then I obtained the blessing.” Now, will you who are here tonight, especially you who are not saved, try to hear me in that fashion, not noticing how I preach, because I do not care much about that myself—and you need to care about it far less—but only to think what good can be got out of it? Let each hearer ask himself, “Is there anything of saving benefit to my soul in what the preacher will say tonight?”

Now, this text contains the Gospel in brief, and yet I may say that it contains the Gospel in full. If you get condensed notes of a sermon or a speech, you often miss the very soul and marrow of it, but here you get all the condensation possible, as if the great truths of the Gospel were pressed together by a hydraulic ram, and yet there is not a particle of it left out.

It is one of the “little Bibles,” as Luther used to call them—the Gospel in a verse, the essence of the whole Bible is here—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

I. Now I am going to be short upon each point and therefore I shall at once speak upon this first head. Here is OUR NAME, OR A BROAD WORD OF DESCRIPTION—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

One of the most important questions that can be asked by any man is this, For whom is salvation meant? The answer we have is given by the Holy Ghost in the inspired Word of God—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Jesus Christ came to save *sinners of all sorts*. So long as you can come under the general description “sinners,” it matters not what shape your sin has taken. All men have alike sinned, and yet all have not sinned in the same way. They have all wandered the downward road and yet each one has gone a different way from all the rest.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable sinners and disreputable sinners. He came into the world to save proud sinners and despairing sinners. He came into the world to save drunkards, thieves, liars, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers, and such like. Whatever sort of sin there is, this word is wonderfully comprehensive and sweeping—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*."

A black lot, a horrible crew, they are, and hell is their due reward, but these are the people Jesus came to save. If there are any people in the world who are not sinners, Jesus did not come to save them, because such people do not want a Savior. If there are any of you who venture to say that you have never sinned, well then, you need not listen to me, for I have nothing to say to you, nor has this Book of God, except to tell you that you are under a grievous error and a great delusion. There can be no mercy to a man who has committed no fault.

Some time ago there was a man incarcerated for life for an offense he never committed, and when it was found out that he was not guilty, Her Majesty insulted him, I think, by giving him "a free pardon." Why, he had never committed the crime for which he had suffered, poor soul, and he had been a year at least in confinement as a felon, though he was innocent!

I think Her Majesty should have begged his pardon and given him large compensation. Pardon and mercy are not for innocent people—they are for the guilty. And the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, came into the world, not to save the innocent, the righteous, and the good—but to save sinners.

Notice, next, that Jesus came to save *sinners without any other qualification*. There is a habit which some have of qualifying the word sinner, as we have it in the hymn,—

"Come, humble sinner, in whose breast,"

and so on. I think the writer of that hymn put it—

***"Come, trembling sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve."***

But when Jesus Christ invites sinners, He does it after this fashion, "Come, sinners." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." There is no adjective before the noun. There is no sort of qualification except that they are sinners.

Christ Jesus came to save hardened sinners, for He softens the heart. He came to save aggravated sinners, for He breaks the iron sinew of the neck and subdues the stubborn will. He came to save sinners who have no good thing in them. "If you have any merit," said one to another, "if you have any good thing about you, it is like a drop of rose water in a sea of filth."

But truly, there is not even that one drop of rose water in our nature—nor need there be in order that Christ may save us. He came to save sinners—that is all Paul says. I dare not limit what is left unlimited. I dare not qualify what is left unqualified. "Sinners"—that is all the apostle says. What! If they have no trace of goodness, no mark of anything excellent? Yes. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

This means, also, that Christ Jesus came to *save sinners in their pollution*. Remember that sin is a very offensive thing. When conscience is really awakened to discover the pollution of sin, it is seen to be exceeding sinful, a thing that is truly horrible. We are taught, in the Scriptures, even to hate the garments spotted by the flesh—and there is such a thing as a righteous indignation against sin.

But the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to save the polluted, to save those against whom virtue gives her vote, to save those whom society expels. What a wonderful thing "society" is, itself rotten to the core very often, and yet, if there happens to be a poor woman who has gone astray, "society" cries, "Put her out! Drive the wretched creature away from us."

I have known one such turned out of hotel after hotel. They could not bear their righteous selves to come anywhere near to one who had in the least degree broken the laws of society.

Yet it was not so with Christ. Notwithstanding all His sense of the horror of sin—and it is much greater than our sense of it, for His mind is sensitive because of its supreme purity—yet, notwithstanding that, He came into the world to save sinners, and with sinners He mixed, even with publicans and harlots.

With sinners He sat at meat. With sinners He lived. With sinners He died. He made His grave with the wicked. He entered paradise with a thief. And today, those who sing the new song in heaven confess that they were sinners, for they say, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Yes, notwithstanding the pollution of sin, Christ came to save sinners.

He came, also, to save *sinners under the curse*. Sin is a cursed thing. God has never blessed sin and He never will do so. Though sin may seem to flourish for a time, the blight of the Almighty is upon it—the breath of the great Judge of all will wither up everything that grows of evil. He cannot bear it—His fire shall burn, even to the lowest hell, against all iniquity. And yet, though you are under the curse, Jesus Christ came into the world to save the accursed sinner by taking the curse upon Himself, and Himself hanging on the tree of the curse, and bearing the curse for us, that we might be saved.

Do you feel the curse of God in your spirit, tonight? Does it seem to dry up all the springs of your life? Then remember, notwithstanding that, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Once more, Christ came to save *sinners without strength*. Sin brings death. Wherever sin reigns, the power to do good dies out. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” But when you are without strength, ah, even without strength to believe on Him—without strength to feel your sin, without strength to feel even a desire to be better—even then it is true that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

I know He did, for the first good desires are His gift. The first prayers are His own breath. The first sigh under the burden of sin is His own work. Jesus does it all. He came into the world to save us. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” those in whom there could not be any trace of goodness—“the ungodly”—those who were without God and without hope in the world. It is for such that Jesus Christ came into the world.

I do not know how to set this gate open wider. I will take it right off its hinges and I will pull up post and bar and all, and defy the very devils of hell to come and shut this city of refuge against any soul here that is a sinner. If you have sinned, behold, the voice of everlasting love speaks aloud to you tonight these words, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

II. I must not dwell long on any one word in our text, so I pass to another. In the second place, here is OUR NEED, OR A WIDE WORD OF SALVATION. We poor sinners need saving and “Christ Jesus came into the world to *save* sinners.”

Jesus came to save. *He did not come to condemn us*. When God came down upon earth, it might have been thought that He must have come to condemn, for when He came down to look at the tower of Babel, and saw the sin of the world, He scattered the sinners upon the face of all the earth. Now, it might be thought that if He came on earth, He would be shocked and horrified by a personal investigation of sin and then would say, “I will destroy the world.”

But Jesus said, “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” If you get condemnation out of the Gospel, you put the condemnation into it yourselves. It is not the Gospel, but your rejection of it, that will condemn you. Therefore, I pray God that you may never put from you the Word of God and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, as they did to whom Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch.

But next, Christ did not come into the world *to help us to save ourselves*. He came to save us—not to set us on our legs and say, “Now you do so much, and I will do the rest.” No, He came to save us. From top to bottom salvation is all of grace and all the gift of God by Jesus Christ. He did not come into the

world, I say, to make us salvable, but to save us—nor to put us in the way of somehow or other meriting salvation. He came Himself to be the Savior and to save sinners.

Cannot you see that you, who have been trying to spin a robe of righteousness, got all that you do in the day unraveled before night? You who have been knitting part of a garment to cover your nakedness, put your knitting needles down, and take what Christ has finished. Come, you who have been working hard, like prisoners on a treadmill, trying to get to heaven that way, you will never do it.

See another ladder, like that which Jacob saw of old, that reaches from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, and may God enable you to climb to Him that way, but not by a way of your own! Jesus did not come to help us to save ourselves.

And He did not come *to save us in part*, that we might do the rest. It takes a long time to make some men know this. I know numbers of Christian people who still have one foot on the rock, and the other foot on the sand. There is a certain, or rather, uncertain doctrine that always makes people feel unsafe. It is that you must not say that you are saved, but that if you hold on your way, and keep on the right road, then, perhaps, when you come to die, you may begin to hope that you are saved.

I would not give two pence for such a Gospel as that. We want salvation given to us outright and given to us forever—and this is what Christ does give us when we come and trust in Him. “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” He is saved, there and then, by the act of God. “He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He did not come to save us in part.

And the Lord Jesus Christ has not come *to make us content to be unsaved*. I have sometimes heard people talk to the unconverted like this, “Now, you must wait. You must wait. You cannot do anything, therefore, sit still and wait until something happens to you.” That is not the Gospel. The Gospel is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

Read the Bible through and learn what God has revealed there. Lay aside your own system and notion. You will not find that the Lord Jesus Christ said to the man at Bethesda, “Now, lie at the pool till the angel comes and stirs it.” That is old Judaism that does that. But Jesus said, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” When Jesus speaks to sinners like that, they do rise and take up their beds and walk.

Somebody says, “But you, poor minister that you are, cannot tell men to take up their beds and walk—and make them do it.” Yes, we can, when our Master speaks through us, and when we deliver the Lord’s message in faith, resting on the power of the Holy Ghost. We still can be used by the Lord to work miracles.

The dry bones are made to hear the voice of the Lord’s servant when the Holy Ghost goes with the voice and they are quickened by divine power.

*“The Gospel bids the dead revive,
Sinners obey the voice and live;
Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turn’d to flesh.”*

Again, I say, Jesus did not come to make sinners contented to be lost, or to sit down and wait as if salvation did not concern them. Nay, He came to save sinners.

Well, what does it mean, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? It means that He came *to save them from the punishment of their sin*. Their sin shall not be laid to their charge so that they shall be condemned for it. That is one thing. He came, also, to save them from the *pollution of their sin*, so that, though their mind has been debased, and their taste degraded, and their conscience deadened by sin, He came to take that evil away and give them a tender heart, and a hatred of sin, and a love for holiness, and a desire for purity.

But Jesus came to do more than that. He came to take away our *tendencies to sin*, tendencies which are born in us and grow with us. He came by His Spirit to eradicate them, to pluck them up by the roots,

to put within us another principle, which shall fight with the old principle of sin and overcome it—till Christ alone shall reign, and every thought shall be brought into captivity to Him.

He came to save His people from *apostasy*. He came into the world to save sinners by keeping them faithful to the end, so that they shall not go back unto perdition.

*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

A very important part of the work of grace is this. To start a man right, is but little, but to keep that man holding on even to the end—this is a triumph of Almighty grace, and this is what Christ has come to do. Jesus came into the world, not to half save you, not to save you in this direction or that, and in this light or that, but to save you from your sin, to save you from an angry temper, to save you from pride, to save you from strong drink, to save you from covetousness, to save you from every evil thing—and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

This is a grand word, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Oh, that you might believe it! I pray God that out of this congregation, which is wonderfully large for such a night, and yet small compared with our usual number on a Thursday evening, there may be very many who will say, “Yes, I believe that Jesus came to save sinners and I trust Him to save me.” You will be saved the moment that you do that, for faith is the mark of His salvation, the proof that He has saved you.

III. But now, thirdly, there is a name here. We have had our own name, sinners. Now here is HIS NAME, OR A GLORIOUS WORD OF HONOR—“*Christ Jesus* came into the world to save sinners.” Christ Jesus. Not an angel, not the best of men, but Christ Jesus.

“Christ” means, as you know, *anointed*, that is, God sent Him, anointed by His own Spirit, prepared, fitted, qualified, and endowed for the work of saving. Jesus comes, not without an anointing from God. He is not an amateur Savior, come on His own account, without any commission or authority, but God has anointed Him in order that He may save sinners.

When He went into the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath-day, He applied to Himself the words of the prophet Esaias, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.”

The other part of His name is “Jesus,” that is, *Savior*. He has come, therefore, to be the anointed Savior, commissioned to be a Savior, and if He is not a Savior, (I say it with all reverence) He is nothing. He came into the world to save and if He does not save, He has missed His mark. He laid His heavenly glories down to take this still higher glory, that He might be the Savior of sinners.

The angels sang concerning Him, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” And the angel of the Lord said to Joseph—“You shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Beloved, notice this—the Savior of sinners is not the Virgin Mary—saints and saintesses are not saviors.

But “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, “very God of very God,” the Creator of all things, sustaining all things by the word of His power. He came into the world, to Bethlehem’s manger, and afterwards to Calvary’s cross, with this as His one business—that He might save sinners.

Is He not able to save? Is He not just the Savior that we need? God and yet man in one Person, He is able to sympathize because He is man, and He is able to save because He is God! Blessed God-man, Jesus Christ, You are able to save me!

I cannot dwell longer on that part of my theme, but I wish that you who are seeking salvation would let your thoughts dwell upon it until you have truly trusted Him as your Savior.

IV. The fourth thing in the text is HIS DEED, OR A SURE WORD OF FACT. “Christ Jesus *came* into the world.” We have not to look to what He will do to save sinners, for He has done it.

He came into the world. *He existed long before* He came out of heaven into this world. He was in the beginning with God and He came here. You and I began our existence here, but He existed from the beginning, in the glory of the Father, and in the fullness of time He came into the world.

He came willingly. It is put so in our text—“Christ Jesus *came* into the world.” There is a kind of voluntariness evident in the words. He was sent, for He is the Christ, the Messiah, but He came of His own free will.

*“Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled.”*

He came into the world. I say again, the salvation of sinners is not a thing to be accomplished in the future. If God had promised it, we might trust as Abraham did, when He saw Christ’s day afar off and was glad, but Jesus *has come*—He has been here—God Almighty has been here in human form, dwelling among men. He came into the world to save sinners.

He came into the world so far that He knew the world’s griefs and bore them, the world’s penalty, the world’s shame and reproach, the world’s sickness, and the world’s death. He came into the world, into the very center and heart of this ungodly world, and there He dwelt, “holy, harmless, and undefiled.”

Christ Jesus came into the world and when He came here, it was such a wonderful coming that *He stayed here*. Some three and thirty years He was here and all that while He was still seeking to save sinners. During the last three years He went about doing good, always hunting up sinners—and at the end of His service for sinners He stretched out His hands and feet, and yielded up Himself to die for sinners. He breathed out His very soul for sinners. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”

I do not feel that I have any need to find any words of mine to try to garnish this Gospel of the glory of the Blessed God. It is the greatest theme on which a man ever spoke. It needs no oratory to set it forth. The story itself is marvelous, “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.” God could not in justice pass over human sin without an atonement, but He made the atonement Himself. Jesus, who is one with the Father, came here and offered Himself as a sacrifice that He might save sinners.

Now, *if He does not save sinners, His coming here is a failure.* Do you believe, can you imagine, that Christ’s coming into the world could be a failure? In my very soul I believe that all He meant to accomplish by His coming here He will accomplish—that no man shall ever be able to point to any failure in this grandest of divine enterprises. There is no failure in creation—there will be no failure in Providence. And when the whole story is ended, there will be no failure in this great work of Redemption. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and sinners shall be saved. Will *you* be among them, my dear hearer? Why should you not be among them?

V. Once more. We have here, in the fifth place, OUR ACCEPTANCE, OR A WORD OF PERSONALITY. The apostle says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; *of whom I am chief.*” I am not going to dispute with the apostle and yet, if he were here, I should be a little dubious as to his right to the title of “chief of sinners,” and I would ask him whether, if he were chief, I was not the next.

I suppose that there are many here who would say, “Paul sinned no more grievously than we did before our conversion.” I remember, in preaching once, I said that if I ever got to heaven, those lines would be true of me,—

“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,

*While heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of sovereign grace."*

When I had done preaching, a lady met me in the aisle and she said, "You made one mistake in your sermon." "Oh, dear heart!" I replied, "I daresay I made twenty." She said, "But the one you made was this. You said that you would sing the loudest when you got to heaven—but you will not. When I get there, I shall owe more to the grace of God than you will—you have not been such a sinner as I have been."

Well, I found all the other saints around us were of a mind to contest about which should praise God most because of the great things He had done for them in saving their souls. Ralph Erskine wrote a hymn about the contention amongst the birds of paradise as to which should praise God best, and he describes the different kinds of people in heaven all vying with each other in magnifying the name of the Lord who had redeemed them. But that is not my theme just now.

When we come and appropriate this sinner's Savior, we do it, first, by a *confession*. "Lord, I am a sinner. I know it. I mourn over it. I confess to You that I have broken Your righteous law." Then there follows, on that confession, a sense of *humiliation*. Did Jesus come into the world to save me? Then I am a greater sinner than I thought I was—first, that I should need the Son of God to save me, and next, that I should sin against love so amazing, so surprising, as to rebel against One who would come into the world to save me.

The more we appreciate Christ's saving sinners, the more we depreciate ourselves. He who has a great Savior will feel himself to be a great sinner. And he who has the best and clearest view of Christ is the man who will say, "Of whom—namely, of the saved sinners—I am chief."

Now, this appropriation of Christ, which began with confession and went on to deep self-humiliation, flowers into *faith*, because, notice, the apostle says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Though he says that he is chief of them, yet he means also, "I am one of those He came to save." "Of whom I am chief."

"Oh, yes, I am one of those he came to save!" Faith enables the soul to say that. My dear friends, I do trust that, by the grace of God, many of you will say that tonight. "Lord Jesus, I trust in You. Of the multitude that You did come to save, who are described as sinners, I am one."

This appropriation of Christ by faith will go on to *open confession* of Him. The apostle confesses that, while he was the chief of sinners, yet Christ died for him, and you will be led to make that confession. I hope that you will do it as our friends are going to do it tonight—by obedience to Christ's law in baptism, as He bids you, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."

One thing I notice about my text which greatly delights me. Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom *I am chief*." No, no, Paul, that expression will not do. Why, my dear man, you are a scholar, and yet you have made a mistake in the tense of the verb! It is not *sum*, I am, but *fui*, I was. "No, no," says Paul, "never bring your Latin in here. My Greek expression is, '*I am chief*.'"

"What? After being saved, after being forgiven, still are you chief of sinners?" "Yes," he says, "it is so." And it is possible for a man to be not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles and yet to feel that, in putting his whole life together, he has to take his place among the sinners, ay, at the head of them, as the chief of sinners.

I think I told you that I once tried the plan, which some of our brethren try, of praying to God as a saint. Why, I have seen some of our brethren, when they have had a Sunday out, with their best go-to-meeting clothes on, talk about their being perfect, and they looked exactly like the peacock I saw with his tail spread out, strutting along so grandly!

Well, I rather liked the look of that fine show—there was something very beautiful in it—so I tried it myself once. I went to God in prayer boasting about my virtues, and my attainments, and my growth in His grace, and my service for Him. I think that I have as good a right to do that as anybody else has. I have served God with all my might and I have laid everything at His feet.

But when I tried to pray that way, I knocked at the gate and nobody came. I knocked again, but nobody came. There is a little wicket, you know, that they open, just to look out to see who is there. So they asked, “Who is that knocking?” I answered, “Oh, it is a saint! It is one who has grown in grace until he is perfectly sanctified, one who has preached the Gospel for many years.”

They just shut the gate at once—they did not know anything about me in that capacity. So I stood there and got nothing. At last, broken-hearted and full of grief, I knocked again with all my might, and when they asked, “Who is there?” I said, “Here is a poor sinner who has often come to Christ in that capacity, and has taken Him to be his whole righteousness and salvation, and he has come again just as he used to come.” “Ah!” they said, “it is you, is it? We have known you for many years. You are always welcome.” I found that I had access to my God when I said, “I am the chief of sinners. I am a sinner still.”

Well, now, putting myself in that position, where I always must be and always hope to be, I would say to any sinner here, whoever you may be, come, friend, come along with me to the cross. One says, “But I cannot go with you. You have been a minister of the Gospel these thirty years and more.” My dear friend, I am a poor sinner still and I have to look to Christ every day as I did at the very first. Come along with me. Come along with me. It is many, many years since, on a snowy morning, I looked to Him and was lightened. I wish that, this snowy night, some soul here would look to Him and live.

I had much more to say, but the time has gone, so I just leave you with my text, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” It is a blessed proverb, an apostolic proverbial saying—but it is a true saying—“It is a faithful saying.” Everybody who has tried it has found it true. It is worthy of the acceptance of you all, and it is worthy of all the acceptance that any one of you can give to it.

You may come and trust your soul on it for time and for eternity. You may come with all your burden of sin upon your shoulders. You may come with all your need of feeling, with all your hardness of heart, and just take as your Savior this Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. Only trust Him and when you have trusted Him, you have done much more than you dream.

Some people think that there is nothing in faith, but God is pleased with it and “without faith it is impossible to please God.” If God is pleased with it, there is a great deal more in it than some imagine. That faith contains within itself a future life of holiness. It is the one acorn out of which countless forests will yet grow. Believe thou!

May the Lord help you to believe in Jesus immediately! Ere you leave this place, trust Him! Trust Him wholly. He came to save sinners. Let Him save you. It is His business—it is not yours. Leave yourself in His hands and He will save you, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 TIMOTHY 1:1-17

Verse 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;*

Christ is our hope. We have not a shadow of a hope apart from Him. I remember, when on the Continent, seeing on a cross the words, “*Spes unica*,” the unique, the only hope of man—and that is true of the cross of Christ, and of Christ who suffered on it. He is our hope.

2. *Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Notice the apostle’s triple salutation, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Whenever Paul writes to a church, he wishes “grace and peace.” But to a minister he wishes, “grace, mercy, and peace.” Ah! we want mercy more than the average of Christians. We have greater responsibilities, and consequently, might more readily fall into greater sin—so to a minister Paul’s salutation is, “grace, mercy, and peace.”

3-4. *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.*

You see, the apostle, in his day, had to contend against those who ran away from the simplicity of the Gospel into all manner of fables and inventions. Such, in our day, are the doctrine of evolution, the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine of post-mortem salvation, the doctrine of the final restitution of all men, and all sorts of fables and falsehoods which men have invented.

5-7. *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*

There were some who put the law into its wrong place. They made it a way of salvation—which it never was meant to be, and never can be. It is a way of conviction. It is an instrument of humbling. It shows us the evil of sin, but it never takes sin away.

8. *But we know that the law is good, if a man uses it lawfully;*

In its own place it has its own uses, and these are most important.

9-13. *Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

Paul must have written this verse with many tears. What a wonder of grace it was that he should be put into the sacred ministry, to bear testimony for Christ, when he had been before a blasphemer.

13. *And a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

He almost thought that if he had done all this willfully, he might not have been forgiven, but he felt that here God spied out the only extenuating circumstance, namely, that he was mistaken—"I did it ignorantly, in unbelief."

14-15. *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am, chief.*

He spoke from his heart, from deep experience. This indeed was to him the glorious Gospel of the blessed God that had saved him, the very chief of sinners. He could therefore with confidence commend it to others as worthy of all acceptation.

16. *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

The case of Paul is not a singular one—it is the pattern one. If there are any here who feel that they have sinned like Saul of Tarsus, they may be forgiven like Paul the apostle. He is a pattern to all who should thereafter believe in Christ to life everlasting. Just as we often see things cut out in brown paper and sold as patterns, so is the apostle Paul the pattern convert. What God did for him, He can do for thousands of others.

17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Paul could not help this outburst of praise. He must put in a doxology. When he remembered his own conversion and pardon, and his being entrusted with the ministry of the Gospel, he was obliged to put down his pen and lift up his voice in grateful thanksgiving to God. So may it be with us as we remember what great things the Lord has done for us!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—552, 614, 598

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.